DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 094 796 IR 001 037

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TITLE Library Information Service.
INSTITUTION Inglewood Public Library, Calif.
PUB DATE 74
NOTE 27p.
AVAILABLE FROM City of Inglewood, Finance Department, One Manchester Boulevard, Inglewood, California 90301 ($3.00)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.85 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Information Services; *Library Reference Services; *Library Technicians; *Manuals; *Public Libraries; Reference Books
IDENTIFIERS California; Inglewood

ABSTRACT

The Inglewood, California Public Library provides a paraprofessional information service to assist its patrons in their initial encounters with the library. Persons staffing the information desk are specially trained to answer the telephone, orient patrons to the library, screen information requests, and provide ready reference service. These reference assistants are classified as senior library clerks and serve under the reference division. A desk collection of ready reference materials is maintained for their use. They are also expected to be familiar with all other tools used frequently by the public. The use of information assistants is seen to be consistent with the general library goal of giving equal attention to all public information needs. This work is intended as a manual for library reference assistants and as an informative study for library planners. (PF)

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INGLEWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY
101 West Manchester Boulevard
Inglewood, California 90301

1974

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Library information service. Inglewood, Calif., Inglewood Public Library, 1974.

Bibliography: p. 23
1. Reference services (Libraries)—Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. Perkins, John W., 1917– II. Inglewood Public Library.

Z711.L55 023'.9 74-17181
ISBN 0-913578-06-1

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INTRODUCTION

THE NEED FOR A POLICY AND PROCEDURAL MANUAL

Since the inception of the Library, procedures for providing reference and information service as well as job descriptions have been formulated. However, no complete manual covering the information service has been prepared. Moving into a new four-level main library building became a factor because of changes in operating procedures. Also, a complete procedures manual is needed so that new procedures conform to the Library's general objectives, goals, and activities study recently printed.

THE VALUE OF A POLICY AND PROCEDURAL MANUAL

In the preparation of the manual, a review of current policies and procedures was necessary. This did result in some re-thinking, changes, more effective use of personnel, and hopefully, improved service.

A procedural manual of this type is additionally useful in a number of ways:

1) It serves as an instructional manual for new employees.

2) It can be used to review functions and activities, either by the employee on the job or by his supervisor.

3) It aids administrators, professional staff, and city officials in the understanding of the information service function.

4) It aids library administrators in making comparative evaluations of their own functions.

5) It provides case study materials for library schools.

6) It can be used as a reference source for those teaching Library Technical Assistant (LTA) programs.

DEFINITION OF INFORMATION SERVICE

Information service consists of a staff of well trained personnel, familiar with all aspects and functions of the library and its services, who assist and direct the patron in his initial encounter with the library. This encounter is either in the library or on the telephone. Directional or informational service encompasses not only library facilities and services but those available throughout the community.

THEORY OF INFORMATION SERVICE

A major function of a library is to answer the requests for information received from the public it serves. Many of these requests require directional or interpretive information as opposed to reference or research information. Although requests for information regarding directions and requests for assistance in the use of the library's resources are, perhaps, less weighty than a research question, they are equally important to the public being served and demand equal attention by the library staff. Consequently, a library intent on serving its public as fully as possible will recognize the different types of information requested and provide adequate staff to handle the different inquiries.

BACKGROUND

Information service in the Inglewood Public Library has evolved through needs in three areas of activity: (1) telephone calls, (2) directional information, and (3) para-professional reference service.

When the Library was founded in 1962 and the main library was located in a rented store space, telephone calls were answered at the circulation desk. This arrangement was satisfactory initially —— that is, until complications in the form of growing complexity in divisional structure and subject referral demands called for greater library know-how to route calls properly or answer questions. These demands increasingly called for the reference librarian on duty to be involved with basic directional information. In time the reference staff was involved to such an extent that reference service became almost impossible through lack of time to follow through on questions that involved literature searches.

We then determined it would be advisable to train selected Library staff members to answer telephone calls, routing them to the source best able to respond. In effect, the information service has evolved into (1) a telephone answering service, (2) a receptionist service, and (3) a para-professional reference service.

All main library telephone lines are first answered at the information desk by personnel especially selected and trained to understand library services, functions, programs, and resources as well as for the ability to work well with the public. To the library user who appears in person, the Information Assistant acts first as a receptionist, may give directional information and, when necessary, act as an aid to the reference staff in the handling of selected ready reference information and public catalog searches.

OBJECTIVES, GOALS, AND ACTIVITIES

The Library has printed a study, Library Objectives, Goals, and Activities, including a six-page section on information service which is reproduced below.

In preparing the goals study it became apparent that many library divisions had similar goals and activities. These common goals and activities —— that is, those common to three or more divisions, were extracted and restated to provide uniformity. It should be noted that, although there are many goals and activities in common, each division interprets these goals and performs these activities in a manner relating to its divisional requirements.

It may sometimes be difficult to understand how some general goals and activities relate to the information service function. The Library already has a position description that states what Information Assistants do, and many of these common activities are infrequently performed and are general in nature. For example, "Make studies and reports" might be interpreted as special assignments concerning telephone requests, determining initial basic trade bibliographic information, conducting surveys of other libraries' resources and hours, etc. "Conduct inventories of library materials" would refer to those items used in the Information Service collection. "File and withdraw catalog cards and records,..." could refer to order cards in the public card catalog.

A listing of uniform headings (such as budget, community relations, and personnel) was developed in order to assemble goals and activities of a like nature under one heading.

INFORMATION SERVICE OBJECTIVE

The Information Service, as a section of the Reference Division, provides the Library's initial contact with the citizen who requests information concerning library services and materials.

INFORMATION SERVICE GOALS

Reference and information

Provide a limited ready reference service including information on community activities.

Seek and be aware of information concerning activities of and within the City.

GENERAL GOALS

Community relations

Keep in mind that the Library is a public service agency and make every effort to be courteous and helpful while displaying judgment and tact.

Maintain a business-like appearance and attitude with the public and staff.

Develop an awareness of the nature and resources of the surrounding community.

Promote public awareness of the services the Library renders by utilizing all possible communications media.

Develop and maintain an atmosphere of trust and cooperation with the community, involving both an organized and spontaneous approach to public relations activities.

Be aware of public needs for information and of library resources available in order to provide the means to answer these needs.

Conduct studies and research, both original and secondary, in divisional areas of activity, and make results available.

Participate in City-wide programs.

Involve community members in planning of and participation in library service and programs.

Be aware of and initiate assistance when need is evident.

Work with groups, organizations, and other agencies.

Cooperation

Provide assistance to, receive assistance from, and cooperate with other Library divisions, City departments, and other agencies and groups as required.

Latest developments

Be aware of the latest developments in the division's area of activity and the library field in general, and apply where appropriate.

Materials

Identify and select library materials, based on an approved selection policy, so as to provide an ample collection of all forms of library materials that reflect the interests and needs of the community.

Encourage library users and staff to make order suggestions.

Personnel

Make maximum use of staff.

Provide a productive and pleasant working environment.

Policies and procedures

Be aware of Library policies and procedures.

Review and evaluate procedures on a continuing basis to insure a service that is responsive to the public.

Records and files

Provide and maintain accurate, complete, and up-to-date records, catalogs, and files.

Reference and information

Provide reference and information services.

Be aware of the Library organization, structure, and personnel, so that the public can be directed to the proper source for assistance.

Teach the public how to find library materials.

Services

Review and evaluate services on a continuing basis to insure a service that is responsive to the public.

Provide for adequate manpower and materials to continue any initiated or planned services or programs.

Be aware of public reaction toward Library services, resources, procedures, programs, and facilities.

Supplies, equipment, and maintenance

Insure that adequate supplies are available and that equipment used by the public and staff is kept operable.

Be aware of building maintenance needs.

Volunteers

Make maximum use of volunteer assistance.

INFORMATION SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Record and files

Maintain a file of schedules of Library divisions, list of Library personnel, and schedules of library programs and activities.

Maintain a file of community organizations, activities, and personalities.

Reference and information

Assess needs of the public, in person or by telephone, so that correct informational needs are ascertained and proper referrals made.

Take necessary follow-up steps in the absence of the staff member concerned, to insure necessary action is taken.

Verify for completeness and correctness all book request forms prepared by the public.

Provide information from ready reference sources located at the information desk.

Provide the public with and assist the public in the use of trade bibliographies.

Provide information service in Spanish.

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

Community relations

Prepare news releases, brochures, leaflets, and posters.

Prepare booklists.

Contact individual community members, local organizations, schools, libraries, institutions, agencies, recreational facilities, and businesses.

Give talks and demonstrations; conduct library orientations.

Arrange displays.

Maintain public bulletin boards.

Attend and participate in community meetings and activities.

Make studies and reports.

Organize group activities which utilize Library facilities and resources.

Request information concerning community changes from the City Planning Department and other City departments.

Refrain from making negative statements to the public concerning City policies or activities and avoid personal or controversial subjects.

Cooperation

Request materials and services from other Library divisions.

Latest developments

Read professional literature, attend meetings and conferences, visit libraries, and view demonstrations of new methods and equipment.

Materials

Review library media, order suggestions, and use indicators as a basis for selection.

Review new library materials as received.

Analyze Library collections and withdraw materials no longer suitable.

Conduct inventories of library materials.

Materials circulation

Reserve library materials and maintain files.

Search public stacks for requested library materials.

Receive and route library materials.

Personnel

Interview applicants for positions: schedule and supervise personnel; maintain time worked records; prepare work performance reviews and counsel as necessary; determine training needs and conduct specialized in-service training.

Insure that staffing is provided at all public desks.

Conduct staff meetings.

Policies and procedures

Read Library procedural manuals, memos, and reports; disseminate information; report on problem areas and suggest procedural improvements; attend staff meetings.

Explain Library policies and procedures to the public.

Review procedures, activities, and services, and incorporate changes in division manual revisions.

Records and files

File and withdraw public catalog cards and records, accurately and promptly.

Prepare and file correspondence and compile statistics.

Reference and information

Explain the resources, catalogs, and indexes to the public.

Assist the public in the location of library materials.

Have a general knowledge of the duties and operating procedures involved in manning public desks.

Direct and explain to the public the use of the Library facility.

Assist the public in the location of materials and services not provided by the Library system.

Actively seek out and assist the public in the use of library resources.

Services

Prepare and evaluate questionnaires concerning services.

Conduct staff conferences to plan and evaluate services and programs.

Inform other Library divisions of public reaction toward Library policies, procedures, services, and resources.

Recommend continuance of any services, programs, activities, or procedures that no longer fulfill the needs of the community.

Supplies, equipment, and maintenance

Request supplies and maintain a stock inventory.

Inspect and clean equipment and request maintenance service as required.

Survey public areas of the Library for maintenance needs.

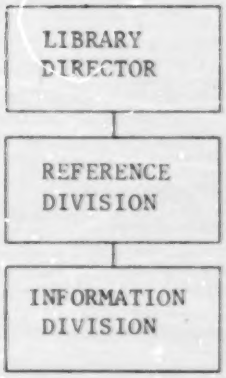
Volunteers

Contact possible sources of volunteer assistance; prepare job duties list; interview volunteers; train volunteers; schedule and supervise volunteers; maintain records of time worked; and evaluate work performance.

ORGANIZATION

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

As indicated in the chart, the Information Service is a subdivision of the Reference Division. Direction for both services comes from the Head – Reference Division.



RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER LIBRARY FUNCTIONS

As indicated in the introduction, the Information Assistant must understand library services — this means knowledge of each division's personnel, schedules, functions, activities, resources, and programs, and the physical arrangement of each division. Some specific relationships with other library functions are as follows:

Circulation Division. Reserve procedure is generally initiated by the Reference and Information staff and submitted to the Reserves Clerk, who is a member of the Circulation Division staff. In some cases a Library Aide from the Circulation Division may be required to locate library material, page a library user, etc.

Technical Processes Division. Since some of the new materials may not yet be included in the public card catalog, Information Assistants may consult with the Technical Processes Division for verification in the on-order file, the filled-order file, the shelf list, and other sources that would give the status of a book. This includes checking for the status of depository materials. Since copies of order slips are filed in the public card catalog by Information Assistants, they must consult with Technical Processes about the filing rules used.

Children's Division. Many titles are included in both the adult and the children's collections. This sometimes makes it necessary for Information Assistants to check also with the Children's Division on the availability of these titles. It is sometimes necessary to confer with the Children's Division concerning children creating disturbances in the adult section of the library. The Children's Division librarians supply the information desks with brochures, news releases, and schedules concerning the operation and the activities of their division.

Audio-visual Division. Information Assistants confer with this division concerning the availability of signs and brochures for the public and any information concerning events scheduled by the division.

Branch Libraries. Information Assistants relate information concerning available main library resources to the branch staff unless the Information Assistants determine that the request can best be answered by another division such as Reference, Audio-visual, or Children's. This determination is made by the Information Assistant unless the caller asks for a specific division.

Social Services. Talking books for the blind are not charged out in the same manner as other materials, but instead are mailed to the patrons. Thus, when patrons come to the library to select their own books these are charged out at the information desk. The Social Services Clerk informs the Information Assistants as to the procedures to follow.

Library Administrative Office. The Information Service maintains a close relationship with the Library Administrative Office because the policies established by this office are communicated to the library user through the Information Service. These policies include such information as special holiday hours, public use of the lecture hall, etc. Supplies and maintenance needed are requested through the Library Administrative Office.

Serials Publications and Documents Division. This Division provides Information Assistants with a current list of periodicals holdings and locations. The list is used for answering telephone inquiries.

Reference Division. The Information Service is a part of this division. All matters concerning personnel transactions, payroll, and staff scheduling are discussed with the head of the Reference Division.

THE SENIOR LIBRARY CLERK POSITION

Senior Library Clerk classification. The Inglewood Public Library's clerical positions in descending order are Library Assistant, Senior Library Clerk, Library Clerk, and Library Aide. The position of Information Assistant has the classification of Senior Library Clerk. This classification — falling between the Library Assistant (the Library's top non-professional position) and Library Clerk — is based on the requirements of the Information Assistant position. The position as defined here, we believe, calls for a Senior Library Clerk. Examples of other positions in the Library with the classification of Senior Library Clerk are Stack Supervisor, Serials and Documents Clerk, and Registration Clerk.

Job element standards. The Library is working closely with the City Personnel Department in conducting job analyses for all library classifications. A job analysis is a pre-requisite for the establishment of minimum job requirements and provides a foundation for the recruitment and selection process.

A job analysis, basically, consists of identifying and analyzing job elements of a position and then rating them according to importance. The job elements include abilities, knowledges, skills, and personal characteristics. Persons involved in the job analysis process may include those performing the same job, those supervising the job, and those with knowledge of the job such as administrators. As the job elements are ranked, those with the highest value are used in the selection process and evaluation procedure.

A job analysis for Senior Library Clerk (which, as previously indicated, includes other jobs in addition to Library Assistant) revealed the following ranking of job elements: (1) ability to communicate (orally) with the public, (2) ability to work quickly under pressure, (3) ability to work independently, (4) ability to make independent decisions, (5) ability to work without close supervision, (6) telephone skills, (7) ability to supervise, (8) knowledge of library resources, (9) tact and courtesy, (10) ability to communicate with public (written), (11) ability to work with minority groups, (12) ability to work varied shifts including Saturdays, (13) ability to communicate with fellow employees, (14) two years college or equivalent office experience (desirable), (15) knowledge of collection, (16) ability to identify and recommend procedural changes, (17) knowledge of classification system, (18) ability to stay on feet for long periods, (19) ability to file, (20) neat appearance, (21) knowledge of library structure, and (22) ability to work with numbers (simple math).

Library standards and working conditions. As noted above, the ranking of job elements will be used in the selection process for new applicants for the Information Assistant position. Although job element number 14 (two years college or equivalent office experience) is desirable, the majority of our present employees holding this position have B.A.'s and are in graduate school.

The position is filled by full-time and part-time employees. Full-time employees, however, have other assignments when off the desk. These include Reference Clerk and Social Services Clerk duties (not covered in this study).

A knowledge of a foreign language spoken by a minority segment of library users is most important. The City pays an additional five percent for this ability — that is, when used in connection with the job.

Position description. The position as noted in this study follows the standard pattern of listing the various duties (or tasks) required in the position.[1] In order to give a fuller picture of the position, the percentage of time spent on each duty is indicated and the duties are ranked by this percentage. This indicates only "time spent" and has no direct relation to the importance of the duty.

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[1] This position description is based on Inglewood Public Library, Library Position Descriptions, 1970.

Job Title	INFORMATION ASSISTANT
Class Title	Senior Library Clerk
Reports to	Head – Reference Division
Supervise	———
Location	Main Library

Summary. The Information Assistant stationed at the information desk (near the entrance to the Library or on the second level information desk adjacent to the public catalog) answers and routes telephone calls, provides general information on the use of the library, assists the public in locating materials, and gives directional information.[1]

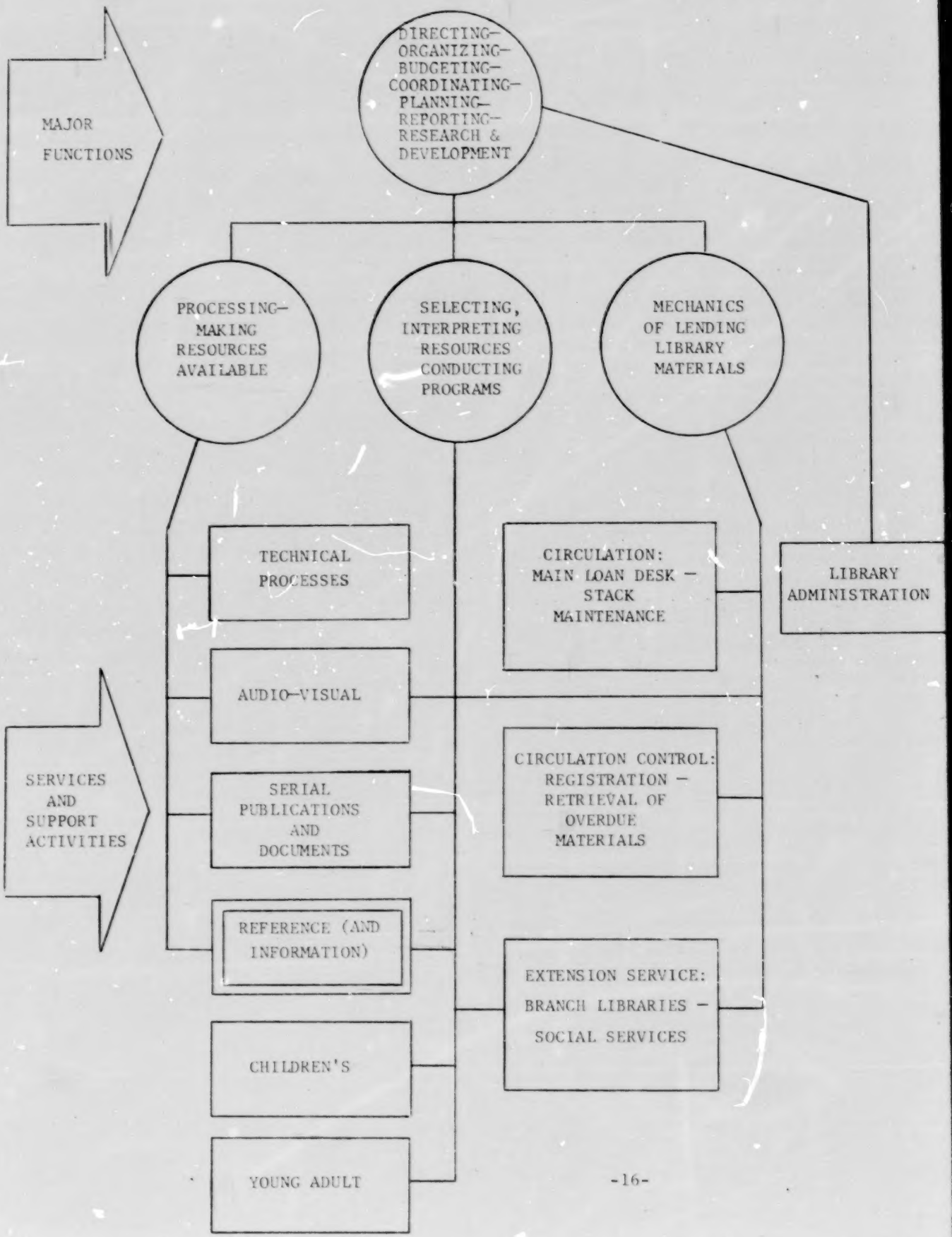
Qualifications. The person holding this position should be conversant with the Library's resources, services, classification system, and policies; should have college background, be interested in books and reading, and be aware of community activities. Ability to work with and be responsive to the public is a basic requirement.

Duties		Percent
1)	Answers the telephone and routes calls (main library public service areas).	20
2)	Explains library resources and services and gives directional information (in person).	20
3)	Performs miscellaneous functions by assignment.	15
4)	Assists the public in the use of the author-title card catalog and in the location of library materials.	10
5)	Identifies library materials from telephone requests.	10
6)	Screens information requests and refers reference questions to reference librarians.	8
7)	Provides basic ready reference information from sources located at the information desk (dictionaries, almanacs, city directories, gazetteers, telephone directories, etc.).	6

[1] Because of the physical demands of working with the public, the job, as with that of Reference Librarian, is scheduled in shifts and the person holding this position is assigned other job related duties when off the desk. The amount of time spent in off-desk duties is not included in the percentage account of this position. During non-busy periods the Information Assistant will work on assignments related to other duties that can be accomplished at the information desk.

Duties		Percent
8)	Receives book requests; edits and completes forms with additional bibliographic information.	5
9)	Interprets trade bibliographic information to the public from sources at the information desk.	3
10)	Maintains desk information files in order to provide ready reference and general information including community events and activities in the area.	3

MAJOR FUNCTIONS OF THE LIBRARY: HOW DIVISIONS (SERVICES AND SUPPORT ACTIVITIES) RELATE.



RESOURCES USED BY INFORMATION STAFF

There are two types of resources used by the Information Assistants. One is ready reference resource material available at the desk from which direct answers are given to the public, and the other is nearby reference material whose use must be interpreted by the Information Assistants.

DESK RESOURCES

Dictionaries. Comprehensive English language dictionaries such as Webster's Third New International Dictionary and The Random House Dictionary of the English Language and selected foreign language dictionaries in the most used foreign languages (Spanish, Italian, French, and German) are kept at the information desk. If an Information Assistant is familiar with a foreign language or languages, the dictionaries from English to these languages should be included in the collection. Currently used for Spanish is Velazquez' A New Pronouncing Dictionary of the Spanish and English languages.

Subject dictionaries are Webster's Geographical Dictionary and Webster's Biographical Dictionary.

Almanacs. World Almanac and Information Please Almanac are used.

Directories. These are all the general directories available for use in locating a particular address or telephone number of a person or business. Because of space limitations, the items kept at the desk are comprehensive only regarding the local metropolitan area. These directories include: city directories, street address directories, the National Zip Code Directory, telephone directories, and agency directories. Agency directories include those for School District and City officials.

Atlases. A large percentage of questions regarding geographical locations can be answered at the information desk through the use of a general U.S. and world atlas (preferably one that is desk size for ease in handling), a Thomas Bros. map for the local and neighboring counties, and a gazetteer.

Etiquette. Most questions regarding etiquette can be readily answered at the information desk through the use of Amy Vanderbilt's Etiquette or Emily Post's Etiquette.

Calendars. Most questions concerning holidays can be answered through the use of Chase's Calendar.

College catalogs. Only catalogs from colleges and universities in the area are kept at the information desk. A card file of all catalogs is maintained.

Community information. References to the services and activities available in the community are entered on cards which are filed in a Rolodex file for quick access at the desk.

Lists, pamphlets, and brochures. These are used for answers to questions involving prominent people and organizations within the state. A complete list of legislators (Federal, State, and local) with addresses and phone numbers is also maintained.

Trade bibliographies. These are used for the verification of patrons' requests for books and questions about the availability of books on the market. They include: Books in Print, Subject Guide to Books in Print, Paperback Books in Print, Libros en Venta (Books in Print in Spanish), Large Print Books in Print, Forthcoming Books, and Subject Guide to Forthcoming Books. Some of these bibliographies are in pamphlet or periodical form such as Publisher's Weekly (or other trade publications currently used), selected jobber's catalogs such as Bro-Dart and Baker and Taylor, newspaper book review sections (general newspapers, preferably with a wide reading public) such as L.A. Times - Calendar section and N.Y. Times - Book review section, house periodicals (preferably those of publishers from which the Library purchases on the Greenaway plan, dealer's invoices of books purchased by the Library at bookstores, and McNaughton book lists).

City information. This includes information published, in any format, by or about the Library, such as schedules, lists of personnel, manuals, news releases, and program/activity brochures. It also includes information on City and local area programs and activities such as information on other libraries, bus schedules, brochures on parks, adult education classes, concerts, etc.

Materials for distribution. This includes brochures published by the Library or the City and material received by the Library and approved for public dissemination. This material is maintained by Information Assistants.

OTHER RESOURCES

Author-title card catalog. This is consulted for the verification of all written book requests and reserves and for verifying whether a particular title is in the Library's collections. This applies to both branch libraries and patrons.

Telephone directories. The Library maintains a large collection of national and international directories which are consulted by patrons and by Information Assistants for telephone inquiries.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

RESOURCES

These procedures involve a familiarity with all the materials available at the desk and the ability to evaluate their use for possible additions or omissions necessary to keep the information complete and updated. Many of these materials are not available through regular channels nor are they sent regularly to the Library as books and periodicals, therefore initiative is required in finding materials available as well as in ordering them.

Public card catalog. A familiarity with the filing rules used in the catalog is essential in finding materials for the public and filing order slips. In a divided catalog this concerns only the author-title portion.

City and area information. A referral index is kept of City and area resources and services. This is in the form of a Rolodex file at the desk. It is used to refer people to other libraries, human resources and services, cultural activities (i.e,, art galleries and specialized museums), etc. This information is obtained through specific channels such as the City Information Officer and other media (newspapers and magazines, television, radio, etc.). This information is updated periodically for accuracy, through extensive searches by the Information Assistants. Sometimes this means many telephone calls such as in the search for all meeting rooms available for public use and their resources in the Inglewood area. Other information not suitable for the Rolodex due to its temporary nature or size (i.e., brochures and programs) is also available at the desk. If any of these announcements are in the form of posters, these are handled through the Library Bulletin Board Committee which approves all the notices posted on the public bulletin boards.

Trade bibliographies. These consist of various lists of books published. They are made available for use by the public as well as the staff for verifying information necessary for the purchase of a book. Information Assistants assist the public in the use of these bibliographies. The information found in these bibliographies is also required for interlibrary loans. Information Assistants must be familiar with these bibliographies in order to answer the user's needs.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Information Assistant's main duty is to help the public in its various relationships with the Library, by either explaining the use of the resources and facility or directing the user to the person or place where he will receive assistance.

Conduct. To the public, a staff member represents the Library. While on duty or in any way representing the Library, a staff member is requested not to voice opinions about controversial subjects — political, religious, social, etc. Personal appearance and dress should conform to the etiquette of the business world.

Borrowers at the desk must be given prompt attention. If the telephone rings while someone is waiting at the desk, it should be answered but placed on hold while the library user at the desk is helped. If this person needs extensive help, judgment is used and the user that can be helped faster is usually helped first. Recreational reading or social conversation behind a public desk makes for poor public relations.

Telephone. Telephone courtesy is important. The staff member should answer promptly, speak distinctly, and establish the identity of the service. When answering incoming calls to the library, Information Assistants answer with "Inglewood main library." If the conversation is not understood, this should be stated frankly to the person on the line. The telephone is intended for City business only and is not to be used by the public. Personal calls may be made in emergency situations only. Incoming personal calls are discouraged.

Confidential information. All questions concerning the internal administration of the Library — from any and all sources — will be referred to the Library Administrative Office, as will requests for staff telephone numbers.

Library atmosphere. All persons using the Library are expected to treat the building and equipment with the consideration due public property. They should also show respect to others by helping to maintain the Library as a place for quiet reading and study. If children are unruly on repeated occasions, a staff member should ask assistance from the parents. Persons acting suspiciously or loitering in or outside the building should be carefully watched. Any misdemeanor or infraction of library rules should be reported to the Library Administrative Office or to the Reference Librarian on duty when the office is closed.

Reporting. Reactions of library users concerning services and resources should be reported on the "Borrower's Reaction Sheet." The Library Administrative Office should be informed of those visiting the Library professionally.

Difficult borrowers. If a library user is dissatisfied with the service, the nature of his complaint should be determined. A careful explanation of Library rules and the reason for their formulation should be outlined to him. If the library user is argumentative, the division head, branch librarian, or librarian on duty should be called. Under no circumstances should a staff member argue with a borrower no matter how unreasonable his complaint. In difficult cases, the Library Administrative Office should be notified. Rules and regulations that may have to be enforced should be done in a pleasant manner combining firmness with politeness. If a library user complains in any great detail about library services or resources, a "Borrower's Reaction Sheet" should be completed.

Exhibits and displays. The Library maintains an exhibit calendar for displays in all libraries. Requests for information concerning displays or exhibits will be referred to the Exhibit Librarian (or Audio-visual Librarian). Requests to display materials — such as posters and announcements — must be cleared through the Library Bulletin Board Committee. Information Assistants maintain signs and brochures kept at the information desks. Any signs needed are requested from the Audio-visual Division, and brochures are sometimes requested from agencies other than the Library (such as adult education schedules from school districts).

TELEPHONES

All incoming calls for the public areas of the Library (excluding the Administrative Office and Technical Processes) are answered by the Information Assistants staffing the first level desk located near the entrance to the main library. If the person at this desk has to leave momentarily, the telephone can be switched to ring at the second floor desk. When the Library Administrative Office or the Technical Processes close, those telephones are also switched to ring at either information desk. This is possible because the information desks have full call-director telephones whereas all the lines do not show on the rest of the telephones in the Library. All incoming calls come through the switchboard in the Communications Center in City Hall, where they are directed to the various City departments including the Library. The Information Assistants must know not only the names of all the Library employees but also in what division or branch of the Library they are employed. Calls must be transferred by the Information Assistants to the Library Administrative Office, Technical Processes, and the branches when these calls come in on the main library public lines.

Since Information Assistants are directly responsible for answering the telephone there is special training required. All new Information Assistants receive this training from those already in the Information Section. If the rest of the Library staff is in need of telephone training they are referred to the Information Assistants who will explain the procedures. When necessary, Information Assistants may (with approval from the Library Administrative Office) arrange for a telephone company service representative to speak to the staff. Changes in procedures or reminders of these may be issued by the Information Assistants in the form of interdivisional communications addressed to the Library staff. A directory of all telephone extensions in the City is kept at each of the telephones in the building.

REFERRAL JUDGMENTS

These involve everything an Information Assistant does in deciding what to do about a situation or a patron's inquiry. With few exceptions the Information Assistants are the first to come in contact with a patron, and must decide where or to whom to send a patron. For this reason Information Assistants have usually worked in other areas of the Library before becoming Information Assistants and are, therefore, familiar with the Library as a whole. Even though there is always a Reference Librarian on duty, this person does not

normally come in first contact with a patron. It is usually the Information Assistant who refers the user to the Reference Librarian. This often involves screening a patron's request because he may ask for "the librarian" when in fact may need assistance from someone other than the Reference Librarian on duty.

COORDINATION

The Library Information Service, consisting of two public desks staffed by Information Assistants, is a focal point of information in the Library. It is a center for coordinating information emanating from all the various divisions and branches of the Library. Copies of programs, news releases, brochures, schedules, etc., are sent to the information desks. All shortages and malfunctions of supplies and equipment used by the public are reported to, noted by, and acted on by Information Service personnel, who maintain an awareness of all maintenance needs in the public areas of the library. An awareness is also maintained of the general atmosphere in the public areas of the library, and situations reported to the appropriate persons when necessary.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

As Information Assistants answer telephones and are in a prominent place in the library, they are also a focal point for response to emergencies. In case of emergencies the Information Assistants are a liaison between the public and the Library Administrative Office between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. when this office is open. After 5 p.m. the Information Assistants may contact the City Communications Section, the City Police Department, or the Library Director. During part of the day there is a Library Monitor who reports both to the Library Administrative Office and the information desks. Some emergencies are public disturbances, disabled elevators with or without people trapped in them, and illness of the public using the Library.

SCHEDULING

Scheduling coverage of the information desks is the responsibility of the head of the Reference Division, who may delegate it as a special assignment to an Information Assistant. If this is done, the Information Assistant who prepares the schedules is responsible for coordinating work hours in line with Library policies.

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS

Since Information Assistants report to the head of the Reference Division, all assignments come from or through this person. The assignments may be for the Reference Division as well as any other division of the Library. Technical Processes sends order slips to be filed in the public catalog, and the Reference Division assigns pamphlets to be ordered and subject headed as well as lists to be checked in the public catalog. Many of the assignments from the Reference Division are assisting the Reference Clerk (who is also an Information Assistant) in assigned clerical duties for the Reference Division.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

There is abundant library literature on reference work in public libraries, on information centers, and on information retrieval, but only two current published articles on information desk service were located.

Harrelson, Larry E. "Large Libraries and Information Desks," College and Research Libraries, January 1972, pp. 21-26.

Kleiner, Jane P. "The Information Desks: the Library's Gateway to Service," College and Research Libraries, November 1968, pp. 496-501.

The following unpublished study is also valuable:

Guindon, Frances The Information Kiosk as an Asset to the Library. U.C.L.A. School of Library Science, 1974.

INGLEWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY PUBLICATIONS

The following publications are available through the City Finance Department, 1 Manchester Boulevard, Inglewood, California, 90301:

Circulation Procedures, 2d ed., 1972. 75 pp. $3.00

Library Objectives, Goals, and Activities, 1973. 105 pp. $5.00 (73-22178) (ISBN 0-913578-05-3)

Library of Congress Classification Adapted for Children's Books, 2d ed., 1972. 100 pp. $3.50

Library of Congress Classification Adapted for Children's Sound Recordings, 1973. 22 pp. $2.25 (73-6704) (ISBN 0-913578-04-5)

Library Position Descriptions, 1970. 120 pp. $5.00

Library Technical Processes Procedures, 2d ed., 1972. 126 pp. $4.50 (72-13243) (ISBN 0-913578-03-7)